

NADIS Cattle Report and Forecast – June 2009

After busy May, most diseases and conditions showed a decrease in reports in June, with most disease reports falling to levels below the long term average and those seen in the same month last year.

Metabolic disease

The number of displaced abomasums (DAs) reported in June decreased significantly from the very high May level, ending up at 50% of the number seen in June 2008. Despite this precipitous drop, there have still been more DA reports this year than last (and more than any year except the peak years of 2004 – 6). The NADIS data suggest that by year end there will have been between 700 and 760 cases of DA reported; higher than last year and only just lower than the peak figures seen in 2004 – 6; any suggestion of a sustained decline in cases seems to have disappeared in the last two years.

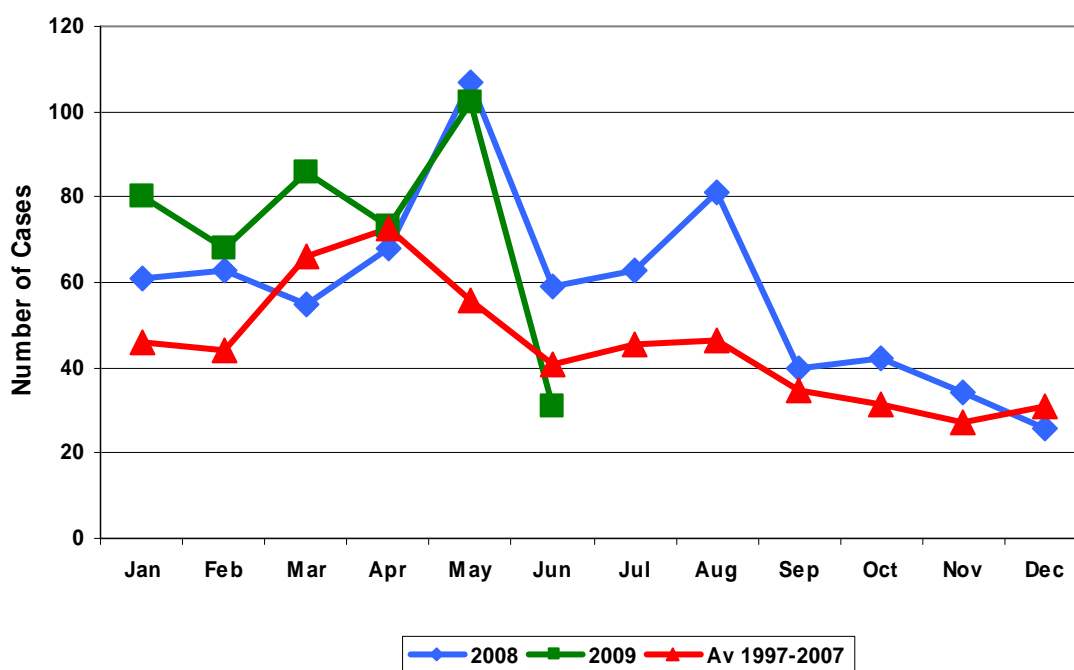
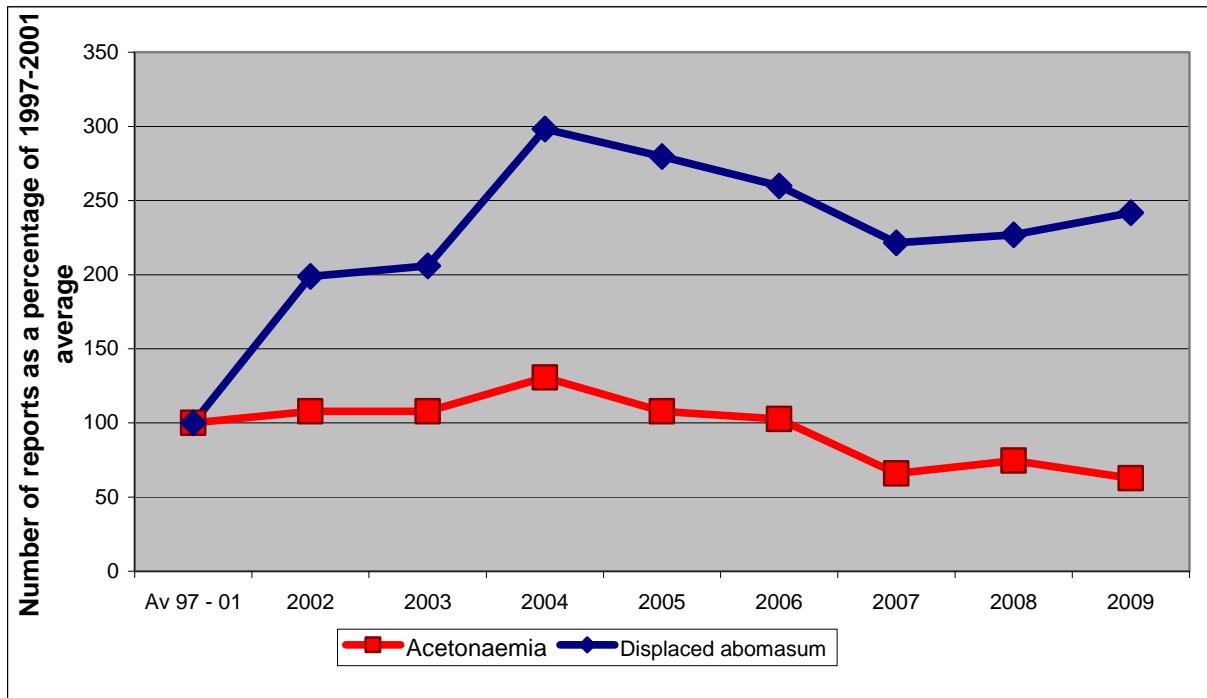


Figure 1: Number of monthly reports of DA in 2008 and 2009 compared to mean of 1997-2007.

In contrast the number of reports of acetoaemia so far this year has been lower than that for any year other than 2001, further evidence that the link between these two conditions is not very strong. Compared to DA cases there has been much less change in the number of acetoaemia cases, and there has been no rise in numbers since 2007 to match that in DA cases .

Figure 2: Number of monthly reports of acetonaemia January to June for 2002 to 2009 compared to mean of 1997-2001



The normal seasonal decline in hypomagnesaemia cases occurred in June, with reports remaining well below the long term average. The low levels seen in June meant that for a fifth year in a row the NADIS figures showed a decline in spring reports of grass staggers. In January to June 2009, NADIS veterinarians reported <30% of the cases they reported during the same period in 1997.

Mastitis

June is usually the first month when severe summer mastitis problems occur but this year, for the first time since 1999 there were no reports of summer mastitis in June. Overall, summer 2009 is settling in to be a bit of a damp squib across most of the country, but June was relatively warm and dry. There is still no evidence from NADIS data that global warming is bringing the peak of cases of summer mastitis earlier, even if it may be at least partially responsible for the spread of bluetongue.

Fertility

Last year there was a pronounced peak in dystocia cases in May which was linked to a peak in caesarean cases. This year both dystocia and caesarean cases peaked in April at a much lower level than was seen last May. However, a comparison of the number of caesareans and dystocia cases shows that the ratio of dystocia to caesarean cases has decreased from 3.4:1 in the first half of 2008 to 2.7:1 during the same period in 2009, despite the very low ratio seen in May 2008 when almost half the dystocia cases reported by NADIS veterinarians resulted in caesareans. This change in ratios is

because the number of dystocia cases reported so far in 2009 is around 80% of that reported in 2008, whereas there have actually been 10 more caesareans reported so far in 2009.

Of the three most common ovarian problems, non-detected oestrus and ovarian cysts were reported less often in June than in May, consistent with the usual seasonal pattern. However anoestrus reports increased to the highest level reported for June since 1997. These high figures are unexpected after the near record lows earlier in the year; 2009 looks likely to be the second year in a row where summer anoestrus cases match or exceed those seen in spring. Suggestions as to possible reasons for this would be gratefully received.

Bluetongue vaccination season is ongoing. We continue to receive reports of fertility problems after vaccination. On one farm in Eastern Scotland, vaccination was followed by cessation of heat behaviour, resulting in the cows having to be synchronised for AI rather than just observing for heat. This is the first such report we have received, so it is far from clear that vaccination was the cause, and obviously the stress of vaccination could be a trigger rather than a direct vaccine effect. It is important that such reports are collated and reported to the vaccine manufacturer as without robust data we cannot make definitive conclusions.

As a classic example, we received a report from NE England of three abortions two days after bluetongue vaccination. Further investigation identified that all three affected animals had positive antibody titres to *Neospora*. Although this is clearly not conclusive proof that the abortion was due to *Neospora*, it does strongly suggest that it was. We need good quality reporting combined with investigation

Lameness

All of the four main diseases decreased in June to levels below those seen in June 2008. The least commonly reported of the four main conditions was foul-in-the-foot. So far this year the number reports of this condition has been 20% of the number reported for the first half of 1997. Part of this decline reflects the decline in the number of NADIS reports of lameness of all types, but like white line disease, sole ulcer and digital dermatitis, the proportion of lameness cases reported by NADIS vets as being due to foul-in-the-foot has decreased significantly over the past twelve years (Figure 5)

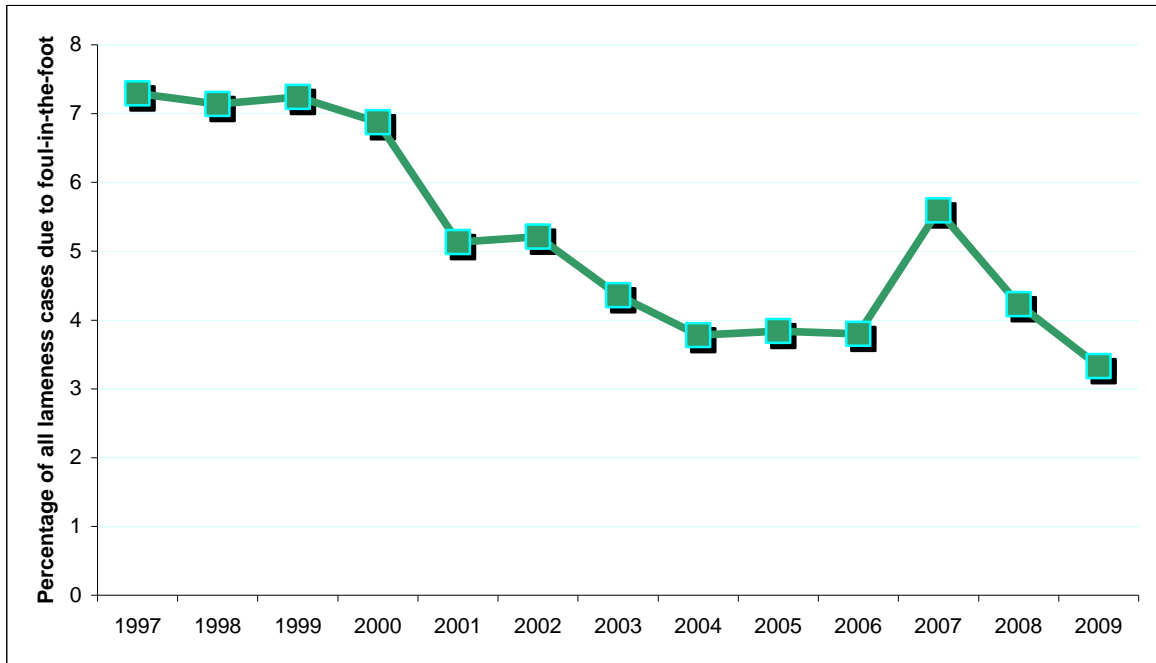


Figure 5: Percentage of lameness cases due to foul-in-the-foot showing the decline since 1997 in the proportion.

Other diseases

In June, reports of New Forest Eye were less common than in 2007, even though reports in early spring were appreciably higher. Last year there were more cases reported during the summer and autumn than in 2007, but total numbers were lower than any other year with <60% of the average number of cases being reported. This year looks set to challenge 2007 for the fewest number of reports.

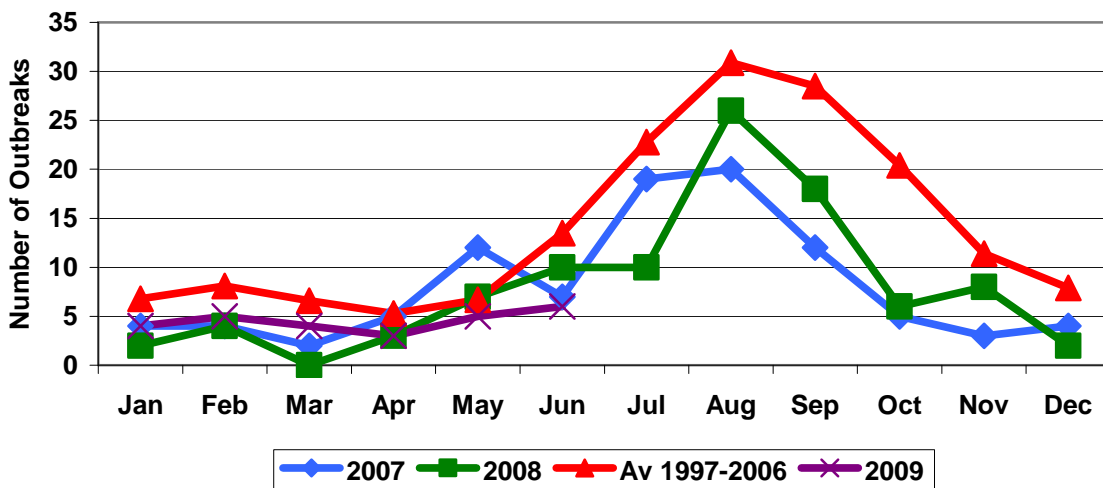


Figure 8: Comparison of number of outbreaks of New Forest Eye recorded so far this year compared with 2007, 2008 and the average for 1997 to 2006

CALVES

Last year the peak number of joint ill cases occurred in April, this year the peak was in May. Even though figures declined in June, the number of reports remained above the long-term average. So for the second year in a row the number of cases of joint ill in the first six months of the year has increased; it is still well below the numbers from the late 1990s, but the rise is still significant and it would be interesting to know the drivers for calling a vet to treat joint-ill – is it numbers of calves affected, severity of disease or value of the calf?



Figure 9: Comparison of number of total number of reports from January to June for joint ill showing the increase over the last two years after a drop in cases between 2004 and 2007

In contrast to the joint ill figures, reports of calf scour and enzootic pneumonia both remained at levels well below the long-term average in June.

Vet 76 (West Glamorgan) has been investigating a problem of otherwise bright calves which were slow to suck. The most severely affected calves dies. Investigation of the dams' mineral status has identified low background copper and, probably more critically, markedly low iodine levels. He has recommended iodine boluses. No evidence of goitre was reported in the affected calves despite the very low iodine levels in the dams. It would be very interesting to know how common iodine-responsive but not goitrogenic disease was. Similar reports would be gratefully received.

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